(ii) No.

(iii) Does not arise.

Liberal visa rules between India and Russia

†269. SHRIMATI SAVITA SHARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any proposal under Government's consideration to make visa rules liberal with a view to facilitate the movement of industrialists and traders between India and Russia;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when a final decision in this regard is likely to be taken?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) to (c) India and the Russian Federation have been discussing ways and means to facilitate travel by businesspersons of each country to the other, as their regular interaction is an important factor in further enhancing bilateral trade and investment. Both the countries attack significance to easy issuance of business visas to entrepreneurs and traders who have interest in each other's country. Various ideas have been discussed. In the second round of Consular Consultations held in Moscow in October 2003, it was agreed that an Indo-Russian Working Group will meet in India in January 2004 to further discuss this issue, among others.

India's help to defuse Sri Lankan Crisis

270. DR. ABRAR AHMED: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Governmet have offered recently any sort of help to Sri Lanka Government to defuse the crisis in that country; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA): (a) and (b) Government of India expressed concern over the recent political developments and issued a statement on November 4, 2003 as follows: "We are surprised at the sudden political developments in Sri Lanka today. We hope that the situation does not provoke a constitutional crisis, which would

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.